

St. Mary's Preschool

God made us for Joy.

Saint John Paul II



Parent/Student Handbook

The mission of St. Mary Help of Christians School, in partnership with parents, is to form Christian leaders who are faithful, prepared, and courageous.

Revised 01/2026

This handbook outlines general preschool program practices. Each family also receives a copy of the St. Mary's School Parent/Student Handbook at the beginning of the school year. Parents are required to sign and acknowledge compliance with all school's policies. St. Mary's administration reserves the right to make changes or amend this handbook at any time.

PURPOSE

St. Mary's Preschool aims to serve families within the parish and local community by offering a faith-oriented 3K and 4K program. The SMP program is developmentally appropriate for children to grow academically, spiritually, physically, socially, emotionally and creatively in a safe and nurturing environment.

GOALS

- To provide developmentally appropriate skills in pre-reading, math, science, social studies, and language arts.
- To explore their faith and see themselves created in God's image.
- To cultivate strong moral character.
- To increase language, cognitive, fine, and gross motor skills.
- To respect, appreciate, and value all people.
- To develop social interaction skills.
- To encourage creativity and imagination.
- To foster a life-long love of learning.
- To prepare students for Kindergarten.

ADMITTANCE

St. Mary's Preschool welcomes all children of ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds. Our admittance process includes a screening with the preschool director and in-person meetings with our pastor and principal. St. Mary's is limited in our ability to serve students with moderate to severe special needs, where a learning environment with specialized instructors is required. Admittance and continuance in our program will be considered and reviewed on an individual basis by our preschool and administrative staff.

3K students must be 3 years old by September 1st.

4K students must be 4 years old by September 1st.

All 3K and 4K students must be toilet trained at the start of the school year. This means that they must be wearing underwear, as pull ups are not allowed. We do understand that children will have occasional accidents. Accidents should be unusual and happen infrequently. If toilet training issues persist, a "break" from school will be required for training to be worked on at home, in order to return to school.

HOURS OF OPERATION

St. Mary's Preschool operates Monday-Friday, 8:00-3:00. There is an option for early morning drop-off, 7:00-7:45 and extended care, 3:00-5:30 for an additional fee. Parents must reserve times with the preschool director on a weekly basis for morning and extended care.

ATTENDANCE

Good school habits and routines are important to establish at an early age. Being present at school will help your child be more successful in the years to come. When children are late or absent, they will miss valuable opportunities to grow emotionally, socially, and intellectually. Please try your best to limit unnecessary absences.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

Morning arrival is 7:50-8:00 on Fairfield St. There will be staff at carline to assist your child out of the car. Please do not exit your vehicle to help. Children will be escorted to their preschool classrooms. You are welcome to park and walk your child to the classroom, but please be mindful of the progression of carline during this drop-off time. There is no parking on the sidewalk where carline drop-off is occurring.

Departure time is 3:00-3:20. Every family is provided a carline sign that must be visible during carline. A staff member will be there to assist your child into the car. If you need extra time to buckle up your child, please pull forward and park so that you do not hold up the carline. Parents may walk-up to pick up their child at dismissal. Parents should park and walk to the playground gate closest to St. Angela Hall.

ALL preschool parents must complete a form indicating drop-off and pick-up procedures a week in advance. If anyone other than the parents/legal guardians are to pick-up a child, the preschool director must be notified in advance. A Photo ID must be provided to the staff for “substitute” persons picking up a child.

TRANSPORTATION

St. Mary Help of Christians Preschool does not provide transportation and at this time does not conduct field trips.

MORNING/EXTENDED CARE

Children participating in morning and extended care must reserve times a week in advance to ensure teacher/student ratio. Students must be escorted for admittance and dismissal from the preschool classroom. Morning walk-ups may enter through the main double gates on Fairfield Street. For dismissal, please enter the small gate on Fairfield using your access code. Fees will be applied prorated at an hourly basis.

ENTRANCE

All gates and doors are locked to ensure the safety of our students. You will obtain a gate code for entry to the school office on Fairfield St. during regular school hours and extended care.

FREE AND FULL ACCESS

Parents can visit their child(ren) at any time as long as the visit does not disrupt the class. If there is a court order prohibiting visits/contact with the child, St. Mary Help of Christians Preschool will adhere to the court order. If a parent/guardian appears to be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, an authorized contact person (currently listed in the child(ren)'s file) will be contacted and asked to pick up the child(ren). If a parent comes to the facility to pick up the child(ren), is not listed on any of the contact/emergency information: however, has a birth certificate and a valid picture ID, does not appear to be under the influence of drug/alcohol, nor has a court order withholding the child(ren)'s visitation/contact, then the parent has the right to pick up their child.

TRACKING OF CHILDREN

Upon arrival to the classroom, the teachers will document the time the child arrived. The daily tracking sheet of children's names will go with the teacher everywhere the class goes. Upon leaving the classroom the teachers will document the time. The time will then be documented upon arrival at the new destination. When the child is picked up, the teacher will document the time departed on the daily tracking sheet.

SNACK/LUNCH

Preschool students will eat their snacks and lunches in the classroom. Every child should bring a spill-proof water bottle each day. It is important to have your child's water bottle clearly marked. Please do not send food items that need to be heated or refrigerated. For your child's safety, do not send hot dogs, whole grapes, popcorn, marshmallows or hard candy, as these are possible choking hazards.

Parents must provide a morning snack for their child daily. Afternoon snacks are required for students staying for extended care. These are good options: cheerios, graham crackers, fresh fruit, goldfish, pretzels.

BIRTHDAYS

Parents are welcome to send in special treats for celebrating birthdays. Please schedule these with the teacher, in order to avoid multiple celebrations on one day. Summer birthdays can be celebrated in May. Invitations for parties will only be distributed at school if every student in the class included.

HOLIDAYS/SPECIAL PROGRAMS

We celebrate holidays with special activities. Teachers will notify you ahead of time, so that you can help make these events memorable. Please check calendars and school emails for dates and details of special programs being held at school.

VOLUNTEERING

We greatly appreciate the support and involvement of our school families. Prior to contributing time to any school activity, parents are required to complete *VIRTUS Online – Protecting God's Children* training and background check. Volunteers must present the seminar certificate to the school office, submit a background screening, complete a volunteer application, read, and acknowledge receipt of the Diocese of Charleston's Sexual Abuse Policy, Confidentiality Statement, and Volunteer Code of Conduct. All forms are available in the school office.

COMMUNICATION

Open communication is a key to fostering collaborative work between school and parents. St. Mary' School utilizes FACTS SIS, a web-based school management system. Each family creates a username and password at the beginning of the school year. This log-in access provides pertinent information for the school. Communication is also done through phone, e-mail, and conferences upon request. Please make sure your contact preferences are noted and we have your most current information.

Teachers do not have use of their cell phones when they are on duty. You may call the main office at 803-649-2071 during school hours. The preschool director is available during school hours and will notify preschool staff of any messages. You may also email the director at ademass@stmaryschoolaiken.com. Email is checked throughout the day and will be responded to in a timely manner.

Teacher conferences may be arranged when a parent, teacher or preschool director sense the need. Please let the director know if a conference needs to be scheduled.

Check the school website: excelatstmarys.com regularly for calendar, reminders and special happenings.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The Diocese of Charleston requires parental permission for the use of photographs and names in all forms of media. A signed form must be on record with the school office. Children's records are accessible to the preschool director, the owner of the childcare facility, the child's teacher, parent or legal guardian, and authorized employees of the Department of Social Services. Staff files are accessible to the director, owner, and authorized employees of the Department of Social Services. All files are kept locked in the office when not in use.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Your child's safety and health are of the utmost importance to us. All preschool staff is required to have CPR and First Aid Training. They are also required to attend a Blood Borne Pathogen/Infection Control class annually. In addition, teachers are required to achieve continuing education credits each year.

REQUIRED FORMS

Please make sure that your child has had all necessary immunizations. Each child must have a copy of their birth certificate and current immunization form on file in the office. A copy of DSS Form 2900 must also be in your child's file.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL FORMS

We maintain a medical form with emergency medical permission and child information on file. Please note any allergies, regular medication, your child's physician, and any other special instructions. Please be sure to update this form throughout the year if changes occur.

MEDICATION

Only emergency medicine, such as epi-pens, inhalers, and Benadryl will be administered by the preschool director or teachers. If a child is diagnosed with an allergy that requires an epi-pen or inhaler, one must always be kept on the premises. All medicine must be in the original containers and labeled with the child's name. A medical form must be filled out with the exact instructions. If a child requires any other medication during school hours a parent must come to the school to administer the medication.

ILLNESS

If your child is ill, please keep him/her home and do not expose the staff and other children. We cannot accept a child with fever, colds, cough, rashes, vomiting or a green-yellow discharge from the nose or eyes. A child must be fever-free, without fever reducing medications and no vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours prior to returning to school.

Please notify the preschool director if your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease so other parents may be informed.

If your child has chronic sinus problems, seasonal allergies or asthma, we must have a physician's statement, so we know that your child is not contagious to other children.

Wounds must be treated and covered at all times.

CAR SAFETY

Seat belts are required by law for all persons in vehicles. Car seats are expected for all children meeting car seat requirements. Cell phone use is discouraged while in carline.

EMERGENCY PLANS

We conduct fire drills throughout the year that teach the children the correct way to exit the building during a fire. The children exit the outside door closest to their classroom. Children will exit the playground through the big gate located by the sandbox. They will then be led to a secure area outside of the danger zone.

Medical emergencies that require immediate medical care health profession are as follows: semi or loss of consciousness, breathing difficulties, severe bleeding, seizure, neck or back injury, repeated forceful or bloody vomiting, possible broken bones, and shock. Staff have been trained in basic first aid and will provide treatment until medical personnel arrive. Parents will be called immediately

following the call to 911. If deemed necessary, the preschool director will accompany the child to the emergency room at Aiken Regional Medical Center and stay until the parent/guardian arrives. All medical/contact information of the child's will be taken along with the child.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline at St. Mary's Preschool will be provided in a manner consistent with our purpose. Each situation is an individual one and is addressed in a manner which takes into account the child's age, developmental stage and individual needs. Our goal is to know each child well enough to redirect misbehavior. Acceptable behavior is encouraged through positive reinforcement. If a negative behavior continues, removal from the group will be our next step. After an age appropriate, supervised time away, the child will be allowed to rejoin the group.

Corporal punishment is never used at St. Mary's. Likewise, we cannot allow a child to be violent with other children. If the staff has exhausted its options with a child's negative behavior, the parent/guardian will be called to remove the child from the school for the remainder of the day. Should the behavior continue, the child may be excluded from school for a period of time. The safety of all children and staff is our number one priority.

HARMFUL BEHAVIOR POLICY

As a preschool, we understand that unfortunately, there are times a child struggles with biting, scratching, pinching or other harmful behaviors. Our goal is to identify the needs of the students and help them learn to develop certain social skills and improve their communication.

If these struggles continue, this policy is in place to protect the children that have been harmed. When an incident occurs, the parents of both children involved will be notified with an Incident Report. The names of children will not be shared in the report. The job of the teachers and staff is to keep the children safe and help a child that hurts others to learn better communication skills.

When harmful behavior continues, a conference will be held with the parents to discuss the child's actions and steps to be taken for modification.

Harmful Behavior Modification Steps:

1. If a child harms another child/staff member and leaves a mark, a teacher or staff member will reach out to communicate how the behavior can be modified.
2. If a child does harm twice within a day, the director will call, and the child will be required to be picked up from the preschool.
3. If the child harms a child or staff member again within a two-week period, the child will be asked to take a one-week break to work on the behavior.
4. If upon the return after the one-week break, the child harms again, the child may be dismissed from the preschool program for the remainder of the school year.

CLOTHING

Uniforms are mandatory during school hours, must be in good condition (no holes, stains, or fading) and reflect pride in self and school.

School Uniforms by Tommy Hilfiger is our exclusive uniform provider. Order at www.globalschoolwear.com/school/STMA31, code: STMA31

Uniform Code

- Jackets/Sweatshirts/Sweaters: Only sweatshirts sold by SMS Athletics or PTP, navy fleece jackets or navy/white sweaters are allowed in the classroom. Preschool students may not wear hoodies or clothing/outerwear with drawstrings.
- Socks: Solid white, navy, gray or black in color and must be visible above the shoe.
- Belts: Optional.
- Shoes: Solid white, navy, gray, black, or tan (or combination thereof) athletic shoes. No wheels, lights, sandals, boots, crocs or clogs. Shoelaces should be white, navy, gray, tan, or black.
- No formal uniforms required.

- Boys: Khaki pants/shorts (elastic waistbands encouraged, belt optional). Navy polo (logo optional). Hair: natural, neat, short, above eyebrows/collar. No jewelry.
- Girls: Khaki pants/shorts, plaid jumper/skort, or navy polo dress (shorts should be worn under jumper/dress elastic waistbands encouraged, belt optional). Navy polo (logo optional). Solid navy/black/gray/white tights/leggings (no designs). Hair: natural, neat, conservative, uniform-colored accessories. No nail polish or jewelry.
- Casual T-shirts: Students may wear the navy or gray logoed T-shirt sold by the PTO with regular bottoms on any day. T-shirts can be purchased at <https://st-mary-pto.square.site/>.

All children are required to keep a complete change of clothes at school. Please include a shirt, short/pants, underwear, and socks. Items should be placed in Ziploc bag, labeled with your child's name.